

REMARKS OF

THE HONORABLE  
HENRY A. WAXMAN,

CHAIRMAN,

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BEFORE

THE COALITION FOR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Coalition for Health & the Env.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Nat. Health Forum

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GOOD AFTERNOON.

I'M PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO JOIN YOU AGAIN TODAY FOR WHAT SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME AN ANNUAL EVENT. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ARDEN HYDE, EV SHOREY, AND PAUL ROGERS FOR ARRANGING FOR ME TO BE HERE TODAY AND FOR THIS PERIODIC LIFTING OF MY HOPES AND SPIRITS AS I MEET WITH YOUR HOPEFUL AND SPIRITED COALITION. I WELCOME THE CHANCE TO MEET WITH SUCH A VITAL AND PROGRESSIVE GROUP.

I ALSO APPRECIATE THE CHANCE TO LEAVE THIS CONGRESS BEHIND FOR A SHORT WHILE. IT IS -- AS I'M SURE YOU ALL KNOW -- A BUSY CONGRESS: THE BUDGET RESOLUTION HAS ONLY RECENTLY PASSED THE HOUSE, MY SUBCOMMITTEE HAS OVER A DOZEN RE-AUTHORIZATIONS PENDING, AND THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE IS NOW BEGINNING ITS BUDGET RECONCILIATION PROCEEDINGS.

AND IT IS AN UNUSUAL CONGRESS:

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS LIKE A PINTER PLAY, WITH THE ACTORS GIVING LONG MONOLOGUES TO THE AUDIENCE AND NEVER TALKING TO EACH OTHER.

SOMETIMES IT'S LIKE KAFKA, WITH PROGRAMS AND PEOPLE CHARGED AND CONVICTED OF UNKNOWN OFFENSES.

SOMETIMES IT'S LIKE THE WALL GRAFITTI, "EVEN PARANOIDS HAVE REAL ENEMIES."



BUT MOST OFTEN IT SEEMS LIKE CAPTAIN YOSSARIAN IN CATCH 22, WHO WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO AVOID THE SHELLS AND BOMBS, SAYING "THEY'RE AFTER ME. THEY'RE AFTER ME." WHEN HIS DESK-BOUND SUPERIORS TRIED TO CALM HIM BY SAYING, "DON'T WORRY, CAPTAIN, THEY'RE AFTER EVERYONE," HIS SENSIBLE REPLY WAS ALWAYS: "MAYBE SO, BUT THEY'RE STILL AFTER ME."

AND HEALTH PROGRAMS HAVE PARTICULAR CAUSE TO FEEL THIS SORT OF MENACE, BECAUSE THIS IS A CONGRESS AND ADMINISTRATION OF NUMBERS.

THE ARGUMENTS ON CAPITOL HILL AND IN THE WHITE HOUSE ARE ONLY ABOUT BUDGETS AND NOT ABOUT PROGRAMS OR PEOPLE.

AND IT IS, I THINK, REVEALING THAT THE REAGAN BUDGET CUTS WERE AVAILABLE IN FEBRUARY, BUT THAT ITS PROPOSED BLOCK GRANT LEGISLATION WAS NOT INTRODUCED UNTIL APRIL 10, AND THAT THERE IS STILL NOT ONE BIT OF SERIOUS PROGRAM ANALYSIS OR SUPPORTING DATA FOR THE ENORMOUS CHANGES THAT THEY SUGGEST.

LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT THIS MEANS.

LAST YEAR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDED MONEY TO IMMUNIZE CHILDREN AGAINST POLIO, TETANUS, WHOOPING COUGH AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES. NEXT YEAR THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES TO IMMUNIZE 400,000 FEWER CHILDREN.



LAST YEAR 2.4 MILLION PERSONS RECEIVED CARE IN A COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER. NEXT YEAR THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES TO REPEAL THAT ENTIRE PROGRAM.

LAST YEAR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDED LOANS OR SCHOLARSHIPS TO MORE THAN 25,000 NURSING STUDENTS. NEXT YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES THAT WE CANCEL ALL THESE AWARDS AND AID NONE.

LAST YEAR WAS A THOUGHTFUL AND PRODUCTIVE TIME FOR ALL OF US AS WE DEBATED ISSUES OF HEALTH EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND SERVICES.

THIS YEAR, I'M AFRAID, IS MUCH DIFFERENT.

THE ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN NEITHER THOUGHTFUL NOR PRODUCTIVE ON THE SUBJECT OF HEALTH PROGRAMS. WITHOUT ANALYSIS, REPORTS, OR HEARINGS THE ADMINISTRATION NOW PROPOSES TO REPEAL SOME OF OUR MOST COST-EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS OF PREVENTION AND TREATMENT.

IT IS THE ADMINISTRATION'S ARGUMENT THAT SUCH REPEALS AND COST SHIFTING WERE PART OF THE ELECTION RESULTS. SUCH AN ARGUMENT IS EXAGGERATED AND HISTORICALLY BLIND.



THE EXPECTATIONS OF AMERICANS ARE FOR RESTRAINT IN COSTS, PERHAPS, BUT NOT RETREAT FROM SUCCESSFUL HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS. AND IT IS SUCH A RETREAT AND EVENTUAL DEPARTURE THAT MR. STOCKMAN AND MR. REAGAN ARE ADVOCATING, BECAUSE THESE EXAMPLES I HAVE GIVEN YOU ARE MORE THAN ISOLATED ANECDOTES. THEY ARE PART OF AN OVERALL SERIES OF EVENTS, PERHAPS PLANNED (I REMINDE YOU THAT EVEN PARANOIDS HAVE REAL ENEMIES), WHICH MAY SOON RESULT IN MAJOR WITHDRAWAL OF GOVERNMENT AID FOR HEALTH.

THIS PLAN IS TO BE ENACTED IN THREE WAYS DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO PREVENTIVE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:

THE DESTRUCTION AND TRANSFER OF PROGRAMS;

THE DISMISSAL AND LOSS OF TRAINED PERSONNEL; AND

THE DEMISE OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS.

LET ME REVIEW A FEW OF THESE PROPOSALS FOR YOU AND SUGGEST THEIR IMPACT ON PREVENTIVE HEALTH EFFORTS.

MOST OBVIOUS IS THE PROPOSAL TO REPLACE OUR SINGLE DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAM AT CDC WITH 50 NEW PROGRAMS, WITHOUT GUIDELINES, PERSONNEL, OR CONTROL OF INTERSTATE EPIDEMICS. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT MORE THAN NINE MILLION PEOPLE WERE DIRECTLY SERVED BY FEDERAL VENEREAL DISEASE



PROGRAMS LAST YEAR AND AN INESTIMABLE NUMBER MORE WERE INDIRECTLY SERVED BY THE TRACING AND CONTROL ACTIVITIES WHICH PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE DISEASES. THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSAL WOULD CALL FOR "FLEXIBILITY" OF PROGRAMS TO ALLOW STATES TO IGNORE THE PROBLEM ALTOGETHER AND CERTAINLY NOT TO TREAT ANY CARRIER WHO CROSSED STATE LINES.

EQUALLY DANGEROUS IS THE SUGGESTION THAT FEDERAL COSTS BE REDUCED BY LIMITING EXPENDITURES ON CARE FOR THE POOR. THE FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO SHARE WITH THE STATES IN THE COST OF CARE FOR THE INDIGENT UNDER MEDICAID -- A 15 YEAR PARTNERSHIP -- WOULD BE REPLACED BY A CEILING ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL INVOLVEMENT. THE STATES WOULD BE LEFT WITH THE IMPOSSIBLE TASK OF MEETING ANY NEEDS THAT EXCEED THE FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION OR REDUCING VITAL HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE SERVICES.

BUT NEITHER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, NOR THE STATES HAVE FOUND A WAY TO CAP THE AGING PROCESS OR TO CONTAIN HOSPITAL COSTS. AS THE FEDERAL MONEY SHRINKS AND THE AGED POPULATION GROWS, NURSING HOMES AND HOSPITALS WILL DEMAND ALL THE FUNDS AVAILABLE. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HOME HEALTH PROGRAMS, TO PREVENTIVE CARE FOR CHILDREN, TO OUTPATIENT CLINICS?

BUT LET ME GO ON TO POINT OUT THE CHANGES THE ADMINISTRATION IS PROPOSING IN THE MORE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS



OF PERSONNEL AND STAFF, HIRING FREEZES AND LARGE REDUCTIONS-IN-FORCE ARE OBVIOUSLY DEVASTATING FOR THE SKILLED PROFESSIONALS WHO ADMINISTER AND SERVE IN FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAMS: THE DAY-TO-DAY UNCERTAINTY OF FUNDING AND THE INSECURITY OF PURPOSE CREATES AN EASILY SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY OF INEFFICIENCY AND WASTE. IF FUNCTIONS<sup>+</sup> PAYROLLS ARE IN DOUBT IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT EFFICIENT PROFESSIONAL STAFF MIGHT CONSIDER LOOKING ELSEWHERE AND IF AUDITORS CANNOT BE HIRED, WASTE IS NO SURPRISE.

COMPOUNDING THIS PROBLEM OF MORALE IS THE NEW PROPOSAL FROM THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET TO ABOLISH THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS ALTOGETHER AND TO LEAVE THE NATION WITHOUT A STANDING SERVICE FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL PROBLEMS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 192 YEARS. WITHOUT SUCH A SERVICE, WE WILL BE UNABLE TO RESPOND TO NEXT YEAR'S LOVE CANAL OR A FUTURE MOUNT SAINT HELENS. AND WE WILL ALSO LACK A CADRE OF EXPERTS WHO CAN ADMINISTER AND DEFEND PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS FOR THE NATION AND WILL HAVE IN THEIR PLACE OTHERS WHO KNOW ONLY BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURE AND OFFICIALS WHO HAVE QUALIFICATIONS IN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY BUT NOT IN PUBLIC HEALTH OR PREVENTIVE MEDICINE.



UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND PROCEDURE, I WOULD FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THE CONGRESS WOULD NOT ALLOW SUCH SHORT-SIGHTED POLICIES TO BE ENACTED. BUT AS I'VE SAID, THIS IS AN ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS OF NUMBERS, AND THE NUMBERS ARE ALL WE HAVE. IT IS THIS LACK OF ANALYSIS AND PLANNING WHICH HAVE TURNED THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS ON ITS HEAD AND PRODUCED THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS, BY WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION IS ARRIVING AT THESE RESULTS.

IT IS A BAD PROCESS. IT IS NOT A REASONABLE WAY TO DEVELOP POLICY AND LAWS.

MR. ROGERS WILL REMEMBER WHEN THE AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES WERE TO DEVELOP LEGISLATION WITH A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF ITS SUBSTANCE AND IMPACT. THE COMMITTEES DEVELOP EXPERTISE IN SUBJECT AREAS AND ARE TO ADVISE THE HOUSE ACCORDINGLY.

BUT THAT IS NOT THE WAY THE PROCESS WORKS ANY LONGER. NOW A BUDGET RESOLUTION ESTABLISHES "POLICY" IN TERMS OF ABSTRACT DOLLAR "SAVINGS" AND LEAVES THE IMPLEMENTATION TO OTHERS -- TO THE STATES, TO INDUSTRY, TO THE POOR.

I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK FOR THE CONTINUATION AND REAUTHORIZATION OF THE FOURTEEN HEALTH PROGRAMS WITHIN MY SUBCOMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION. I HAVE INTRODUCED SEVERAL BILLS, AND MARKUPS ON THESE BILLS WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.



I KNOW THAT MANY OF YOU ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FATE OF THE CLEAN AIR ACT IN THIS CONGRESS. YESTERDAY THE COMMITTEE REPORTED H.R. 3520, A BILL I SPONSORED ALONG WITH OVER SIXTY OTHER MEMBERS TO AMEND THE CLEAN AIR ACT TO PROVIDE COMPLIANCE DATE EXTENSIONS FOR STEEL MAKING FACILITIES TO ENCOURAGE MODERNIZATION OF THIS BASIC INDUSTRY.

THE BILL ENSURES ADEQUATE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT DURING THE PERIOD OF THE EXTENSION. AIR QUALITY WILL NOT BE DEGRADED AT ANY FACILITY DURING THE THREE YEAR PERIOD. AS A CONDITION FOR RECEIVING AN EXTENSION THE STEEL INDUSTRY HAS ALSO AGREED TO MAKE CONTINUAL PROGRESS TOWARD ATTAINMENT OF AIR POLLUTION REQUIREMENTS BY 1985 BY INSTALLING STRICT TECHNOLOGY ON ALL EXISTING AND NEW SOURCES.

BUT LET ME EMPHASIZE THAT I DO NOT IN ANY WAY REGARD THIS LEGISLATION AS AN INDICATION OF ANY EASE WITH WHICH WE WILL RE-AUTHORIZE THE CLEAN AIR ACT. WITH THE DISMANTLING OF HEALTH PROGRAMS, PERSONNEL, AND PROCESS AS AN EXAMPLE, I ANTICIPATE MANY WEEKS OF CONTROVERSY OVER THIS LEGISLATION ALSO. NEXT TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE SCHEDULED HEARINGS CONCERNING THE EFFECT OF THE CLEAN AIR ACT ON ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN WHICH I HOPE IT WILL BECOME CLEAR THAT WE NEED NOT SACRIFICE PUBLIC HEALTH OR OUR NATIONAL PARKS TO DEVELOP ADEQUATE ENERGY RESOURCES.



BUT I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONGRESS AND ADMINISTRATION OF NUMBERS AND RETREATS. I BELIEVE IT IS WORTH REPEATING AGAIN THIS YEAR THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK OF THIS COALITION IS BUILDING SOLIDARITY AMONG ALL PORTIONS OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH MOVEMENT. THE NEED FOR UNITY IS GREAT AND THE STAKES ARE HIGH. I URGE YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTACT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND REMIND THEM THAT THERE WAS ONCE AND THERE STILL IS A REASON WHY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BECAME INVOLVED IN HEALTH CARE. REMIND THEM THAT THE BUDGETS WITH WHICH THEY ARE DEALING ARE MORE THAN NUMBERS AND STATISTICS; THEY ARE PROGRAMS AND PERSONNEL; THEY ARE ILLNESSES WHICH CAN BE CURED OR PREVENTED.

THANK YOU. I WILL BE GLAD TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.